

## Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

SAJ-01 /067 W

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R 130930Z OCT 75

FM AMCONSUL MILAN

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

SECSTATE WASHDC 4293

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IT

SUBJECT: CABLE FROM COMO

REF MILAN 1631, MILAN 1588, MILAN 1589, ROME 12713

1. COMO, IS IN GOOD ECONOMIC SHAPE AND LESS SHAKEN BY THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS THAN OTHER AREAS IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT.

2. AN ANCIENT TEXTILE AND TRADE CENTER, COMO IS ONLY AN HOUR NORTH BUT FAR REMOVED IN POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE FROM MILAN. ITS RICH ECONOMY DRAWS THREE QUARTERS OF ITS INCOME FROM INDUSTRY AND ALMOST A FIFTH FROM TOURISM AND SERVICES. THE COMASCHI CONSIDER THEMSELVES THE SOUTHERNMOST SWISS CANTON - AND THEIR INDUSTRY AND ATTITUDES EXPLAIN THE CLAIM.

3. ELECTION LOSSES BY THE DC WERE MARGINAL IN THE CITY RUN BY AN IMPRESSIVE, WIREY VERY HIGHLY REGARDED YOUNG CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT. BUT IN THE PROVINCE IT TOOK LARGER LOSSES WHILE THE PCI MADE THE MAJOR

GAINS. EVEN IN THE CITY, THE PCI AND THE PSI EACH ROSE BY ABOUT 50 PERCENT. THE FORMER CITY EXECUTIVE WAS RUN BY THE DC, PSDI AND REPUBLICANS BUT IN THE NEW EXECUTIVE THE SOCIALISTS HAVE REPLACED THE

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REPUBLICANS.

4. WHILE LOCAL DC LEADERS ARE FAIRLY CONFIDENT OF THEIR OWN SITUATION AND PERFORMANCE, THEY ARE HIGHLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN WHICH THEY FORESEE MAJOR COMMUNIST GAINS AND DC LOSSES. THEY ARE CANDID IN ATTRIBUTING LOSSES TO POOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, OLD FACES, THE LOSS OF ANCILLARY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE ALCI AND CISL INEFFECTIVE AND DISHONEST GOVERNMENT. LIKE THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THEY HAVE A PAINED DISDAIN FOR ITALY SOUTH OF THE ALPS.

5. INDUSTRY IN THE CITY OF COMO IS MAINLY TEXTILES, PRIMARILY SILK, AND IT IS BOOMING. IT REMAINS THE LAST GREAT EUROPEAN SILK CENTER HAVING REPLACED LYONS WHICH, LOCAL SILKMEN CLAIM, FAILED TO ADAPT TO MODERN INDUSTRIALIZATION. WITH MILLS RUNNING TWO AND THREE SHIFTS AND IN SOME CASES DOUBLING CAPACITY, NO ONE IN THE SILK SECTOR APPEARS TO BE SUFFERING FROM ANYTHING BUT OVERWEIGHT. SURPRISINGLY, THE ARTIFICIAL FIBERS SECTOR IS ALSO DOING EXCEEDINGLY WELL AS IS THE IMPORTANT FURNITURE INDUSTRY AND TOURISM.

6. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SMALL PLANT CLOSURES AND, OF COURSE, THE RANCO CLOSING WHICH IS A MAJOR ISSUE. ABSORBING ITS NEARLY 800 EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT BE EASY. BUT NEITHER DOES IT CONSTITUTE A REALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE ENTIRE PROVINCE ALTHOUGH IT IS POLITICAL GRIST FOR THE COMMUNISTS AND THE EXTREME LEFT.

7. TALKING WITH SOCIALIST LEADERS AS WELL AS WITH THE DC AND THE INDUSTRIALISTS ORGANIZATION, THE US CAME UNDER VERY HEAVY FIRE FOR THE EVILS OF MULTI-NATIONALS. COMO TRADE UNIONS AND THE PSI HAD JUST HELD A CONFERENCE IN THE OCCUPIED RANCO PLANT ON THEIR MISDEEDS WHICH DID LITTLE TO IMPROVE OUR LOCAL IMAGE AND MUCH TO WHIP UP HOSTILITY TO PREDATORY ABSENTEE CAPITALISM. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A READY AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO THE US POINT OF VIEW, OUR LOCAL USIS RESOURCES ARE TOO THIN TO REACH THIS IMPORTANT PUBLIC.

8. TWO AREAS OF CONTRACTION DESERVE SPECIAL NOTICE. SOME THOUSANDS OF WORKERS FROM THE PROVINCE COMMUTE DAILY TO SWITZERLAND. THE NUMBER

HAS DECLINED DURING THE LAST YEAR AS THE SWISS ECONOMY HAS SLOWED.  
AT THE SAME TIME A MAJOR FRONTIER INDUSTRY HAS BEEN IN DEEP TROUBLE  
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FOR THE PAST YEAR OR TWO AS RISING SWISS PRICES HAVE MADE SMUGGLING FROM SWITZERLAND UNPROFITABLE. THIS HAS NOT ONLY HURT THE MOUNTAIN ECONOMY BUT APPARENTLY TURNED HONEST SMUGGLERS INTO INEPT KIDNAPPERS WHO HAVE GIVEN KIDNAPPING AN ESPECIALLY BAD NAME BY KILLING A NUMBER OF THEIR VICTIMS.

9. STILL AS IN EARLIER VISITS, THE OBSERVER COMES AWAY WITH AN IMPRESSION OF AN EXTRAORDINARILY ENERGETIC, WELL RUN, PROSPEROUS

AREA REASONABLY ABLE TO SOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS BUT LARGELY HELPLESS  
TO COPE WITH THE POWERFUL PRESSURES UPON IT GENERATED ELSEWHERE IN  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, PROVINCE, INDUSTRIAL AREAS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 13 OCT 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975MILAN01893  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750355-0203  
**From:** MILAN  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19751059/aaaacafe.tel  
**Line Count:** 118  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 MILAN 1631, 75 MILAN 1588, 75 MILAN 1589, 75 ROME 12713  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 04 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <04 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <05 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CABLE FROM COMO  
**TAGS:** PINT, PFOR, IT  
**To:** ROME STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006